Licenc'd by Command of the Right Honorable the Earl of SHREWSBURY.

*April* 1. 1689.

*J. A. VERNON.*

Licenc'd by Command of the Right Honorable the Earl of SHREWSBURY.

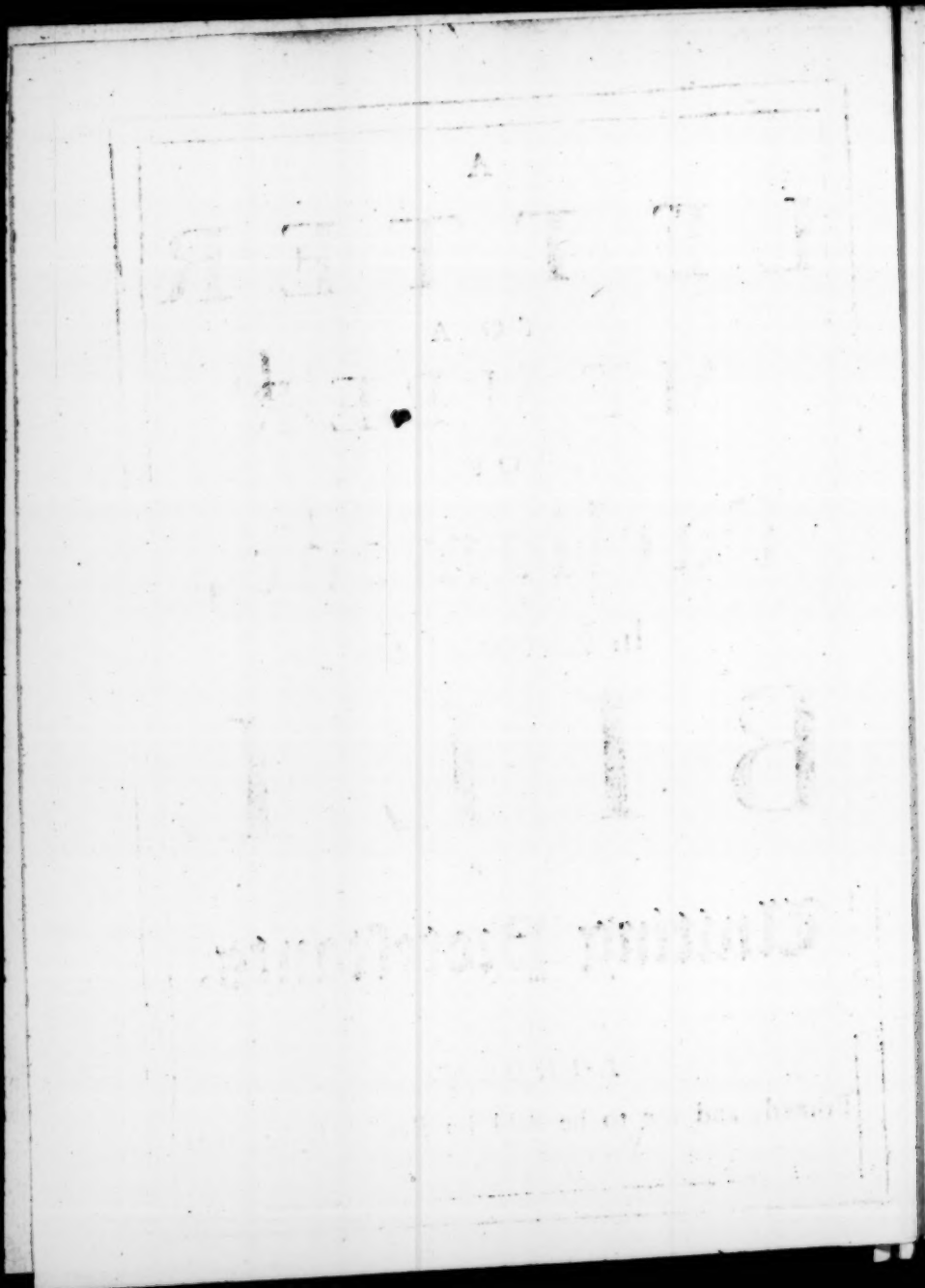
*April* 1. 1689.

*J. A. VERNON.*

# A LETTER TO A MEMBER OF Parliament, In Favour of the BILL FOR Uniting Protestants.

*LONDON:*

Printed, and are to be Sold by *Randal Taylor*, near *Stationers-Hall*, 1689.



# *A LETTER to a Member of* PARLIAMENT *in favour of the BILL for* Uniting Protestants.

THE *Bill* of *Union*, which being commonly spoken of under the less popular name of *Comprehension*, has suffer'd very much among the zealous friends of our *Church*, will certainly meet with a more favourable entertainment when it is more fully understood.

Many prejudiced against the Bill for the name of it.

The *Design* of it is not, as some have imagined, the *Breaking of our Frame*, but rather the giving a *greater Firmness* to it.

Of the design of it.

No *Alteration*, that I know of, is intended by it, but in *things* declared to be *Alterable* by the * *Church* it self. And if *things Alterable* be *alter'd* upon the grounds of *Prudence* and *Charity*; and *things Defective* be *supplied*; and *things Abused restored* to their *proper use*, and things of a more *Ordinary composition*, *revised* and *improved*; whilst the *Doctrine*, *Government* and *Worship* of the *Church* remain entire in all the *substantial parts* of them; we have all reason to believe that this will be so far from *injuring* the *Church*, that on the contrary it shall receive a very great *Benefit* by it.

That it is agreeable to the Principles of the Church of *England*, * Preface to the Common Prayer.

This has been the manner of all *Christian Churches* in all *times*, not excepting the *Roman Church* its self; which has

And of all other Christian Churches.

changed her *Offices* in every Age, but generally for the worſe: And yet other *Churches* havenot t ereby incurr'd the imputation of *Unconſtancy* and of *unfixing* things *well-fixed*. For that which is *always to ſtand* is *fixed*, and that which is *Variable* is by the diſcretion of the Church *accommodated* to *Seaſons*, and *Places*, and *Occaſions*.

No argument of *Inconſtancy* in our *Church*.

Some ſuch thing promiſed to be done by us.

Some *Condeſcentions* have been already *Promiſed*, and *Promiſes* are ſacred things. They were ſo very lately renewed, that he muſt have a very ſhort *Memory*, and a worſe *Conſcience*, that has already forgot them. When the Bigots among the *Papiſts*, and thoſe who *blindly* at leaſt, if not *wilfully* went into their Intereſt raiſed a mighty Clamour againſt the *Church* of *England* as a PERSECUTING CHURCH, the Members of it declared that ſo much as there was of *perſecution* in it, was all a *Court Artifice*, and gave their word for the ſhowing of *ſuch a temper* (when opportunity ſhould favour them) as might fully acquit them of ſuch a *Spirit* of which they were ſo publickly and ſo vehemently accuſed.

And neceſſary to remove the Objection that has been made againſt us of our being a *Perſecuting Church*.

We are now better able to know what is fitting to be done in this matter then we were heretofore.

And after ſo long a time ſince the *Reformation*, and ſo many Revolutions, and ſo many Objections heard and Conſider'd, a *review* of our *Conſtitution* (if we had not paſs'd any *Promiſe*) may ſeem fit to be made, and now to be capable of being made much better, than it could have been formerly.

That it is the only way to remove the *Diſſenters ſcruples*.

It is true indeed for any *Objections* that can be made againſt our *Conſtitution* as now it is, we need not enter on any *alteration* of it. All that have ever yet been brought having been often and fully *Anſwered* with great ſtrength and plaineſs. But it is our unhappineſs (or rather theirs) that they who have moſt need of Books of this kind, either

ther will not, or are not ſuffer'd to read them. Or if they chance to read, yet they come with ſuch *prejudice* to them, as prevents a diligent and impartial peruſal of them. The ſureſt way therefore to remove all *objections* of this kind is to remove the occaſion of them, and that will be done by this *Bill* of diſcreet Charity.

That this *Bill* will be no prejudice to *Eccleſiaſtical Power.*

I am well aware of your highly commendable tenderneſs to *Eccleſiaſtical Power*, and this *review* is not deſigned to be made without the *Sanction* of it, expreſly mentioned in the *laſt words* of the *Bill.* The preſent *Bill* is but a *Preparatory Act*, and may as well be paſs'd in *Parliament* as *Queen Elizabeths Injunctions* without offence to the *Clergy.*

Nor take away the *Fences* of our Church.

Neither need you dread this *Bill* as a means to the throwing down the *Fences* of our *Church. Fences* which are always attacked, and which put us perpetually upon the defenſive part, have more of *Trouble* in them than ſecurity. And certainly after the *Eſſentials* and convenient *decencies* of *Religion* are provided for, our ſtrongeſt *fences* under God are *Unity* and *Number.*

Nor lead the way to the yielding up *All* to the *Diſſenters.*

I cannot ſo far ſuſpect your *judgment* as to think you will ſay, that if the *leaſt thing* be yielded to *Diſſenters*, they will by *degrees* extort the whole from us by their *reſtleſs importunities.* What we yield, we yield not ſo much to *them*, as to the *Peace* of the *Church.* And the wiſdom of thoſe great *Bodies* a *Parliament* and *Convocation* will know where it ought to ſtop. And when once that which is fit is Granted, if Men who affect to be a State party ſhall inſiſt on all that remains, the meer unreaſonableneſs of their demands will procure a denial, and will juſtifie it to all the World.

Nor will it be any diſcredit to us if the *Diſſenters* ſhould ſome of them refuſe to acquieſce in it;

Nor can I any more think that a Perſon of your good ſenſe ſhould harbour a ſuſpicion, that the *Authority* of this *Church* will be made cheap, and ſeem to be proſtituted by an *Offer* of a *Condeſcenſion*, of which it may be the *Diſſenters* will not accept. It is the grief of all good Men of our Communion, that any of the *Diſſenters* ſhould be guilty of ſo much as the leaſt Appearance of obſtructing this *Union* which they formerly ſeemed ſo impatiently to deſire. And I do own that in ſome of them there is more than an Appearance of *Averſion* to this *Bill*. If it were not ſo, after an univerſal forbearance of *Preaching* or *Writing* in thoſe *Controverſies* on our ſide, Books levell'd both againſt *Liturgy* and *Epiſcopacy* would not come as they do, in this juncture, freſh from the Preſs.

As it may be they will.

But on the contrary, ſuch an *Union* being offerd by us will render them inexcuſable.

However, let that be offer'd by the *Church-men* which may be agreed with ſafety to the *Church*, and which has been ſo *ſolemnly promiſed* by them, and they will at once both *juſtifie* themſelves and render thoſe Men *inexcuſable*, who *advance* towards us when we are *Bound* and *cannot meet them*; and when we *can*, and *come forward*, run back to their old extremities of Averſation.

And tho' the intereſted Men among the *Diſſenters* may diſlike it,

It is indeed to be feared, that thoſe who cover *Intereſt* under the pretence of *Conſcience*, and perhaps among thoſe ſome few that are *Paſtors* of Wealthy *Congregations*, may be tempted to deſire a continuance of the diſtance betwixt the *Diſſenters* and the *Church-men*. It would be Policy in them to endeavour that the *Exceptions* may remain as means of continuing the *Separation*, ſeeing by that they gain more than they had reaſon to expect if they were ſet in the common level, in the *parochial charges* of a *National Church*.

But

But I have more charitable thoughts of the *ſincere Diſſenters*; and the rather, becauſe this preſent *Bill* is ſo framed, that it may give them all *reaſonable ſatisfaction.*

Yet we may Reaſonably Hope, all others will approve it.

For, Firſt: As to thoſe *Diſſenters* who are in the *Miniſtry*, their ſpecial *Objections* have been againſt the *Forms* of *Subſcription* and *Ordination.* But now there is only *one Form* to *ſubſcribe*; and that is ſo adjuſted, that as many of them as are *Epiſcopally Ordain'd* may come into *Parochial Cures*, without *ſcruple* at that which is now required. For them that have not *Epiſcopal Orders*, there will be ſuch a *proviſion* made, as will ſatisfie all the *Miniſters* of the *Foreign Proteſtant Churches*; and there is all reaſon to hope, that it will ſatisfie our *Diſſenters.* And then when they are within the Church, they will have no Temptation to make ſuch *Ordinations* as they are ſaid to have done of *late years*, tho even thoſe they have made are not capable of the *Excuſe* that was made for thoſe in the *Ill Times*; when *Biſhops* were few, and thoſe impriſoned, and otherwiſe diſcountenanced by the *Powers* in being.

The conditions of this *Bill* being very *eaſie* both to the *Miniſters*

And then for the *Diſſenters* among the *Laity*; things that are *indifferent* in their *own Nature*, being left *indifferent* in their *Uſe*, the grand *Objection* of their being made *unlawful* by their *impoſition*, will be perfectly removed. So that be they henceforth *uſed* or not *uſed*, they can be no *Bar* to *Lay-Communion.*

And to the *lay-diſſenters.*

For theſe reaſons we cannot but hope that we ſhall have ſome fruit of this *Bill* among the *ſincere Diſſenters* at preſent: But this to be ſure, we ſhall by this means *ſecure* the *next Generation*, who cannot have thoſe *Prejudices* in-

This *Bill* if it has no preſent good effect, yet will ſecure the *next Generation.*

instill'd into them, which now by a *publick Law* will be taken away. And for the *French*, and *German*, and other *Foreign Christians* of the *reformed Religion*, I am well assured both by *Conversation*, and by *Letters* lately sent from *Holland*, *Geneva*, *Switzerland*, and other places; (not to speak of the *Churches* of the *Lutheran Communion* which write the same;) that they look upon the *Church of England* at this Time as the *Centre* of *Protestant Unity*; and esteem the *Conditions* proposed in this Bill (which have been *Communicated* to them) as *Terms* full of *Christian Moderation*, and *fit* for the *Uniting* of *Protestants*. And you are not to be taught how necessary a *Union* is, (especially in this State of affairs) not at *Home only*, but *among all the Protestants in the World.*

And satisfie the *Protestant Churches* abroad.

To whom it has been communicated, and who do highly approve the conditions of it.

It will perhaps be some further satisfaction to you to let you know, that I am not singular in all this that I have with so much freedom written to you. Among all those who have *appear'd* in the *Churches Cause*, as well against *Dissenters* as *Papists*, I do not know one single person that is not a *Well-wisher* to this Bill; and I believe they will all tell you so, if you please to advise with them. And so far as we may learn the *Genius* of Men from their Writings, Arch-bishop *Usher*, Bishop *Sanderson*, Dr. *Hammond*, and a long order of other most worthy Men of the *last Age*, whose *Memory* is most precious in our Church, had they been now alive, would with all Zeal have promoted this *Bill* of *Union.*

This *Bill* approved by the *truest Sons* of the *Church* of *England.*

And upon supposition that there were not in this Nation one single *Dissenter*, that there were no occasion for either *Union* or *Comprehension*, it would still be the *Churches Interest* to propose something of like Nature with that which is now under Consideration, and ripe for its Birth,

And would be fit to be pass'd, tho' it were not necessary for an *Union.*

Birth, and which I hope will not want a legal Strength for the bringing of it forth.

For I pray, is any *Church* ſo perfect, as to lack nothing at all? Would it be a prejudice to our *Communion* to make *Confirmation* and *Excommunication* much more *ſolemn?* Would our Service be impaired by Additional *Prayers* and *Hymns*, and *choice Leſſons*, and an improved *Office* for the *ſick*; and by ſome *new Offices* for *Priſoners* of *Debt* and *Crime*, for the *reconciling of Penitents*, &c. together with divers other things which are obvious to Conſidering Perſons? We may *improve* our *Conſtitution*,

God be bleſſed we are not *defective* in things *abſolutely neceſſary to Salvation:* nor *redundant* in any *ſuperſtitions*, or in any *ſinful Terms* of *Church Communion.* But when we may grow up into conſiderable improvements, and provide for *Peace* and *Piety* together, if we ſhall ſo tye our ſelves down to our *preſent State* as to refuſe to do it, we ſhall certainly anſwer it to the great *Shepherd*, who requires us not only to *do Well*, but to *proceed* in *Well-doing*, and to *abound in every good Work.* Tho it be *already very good.*

To conclude, We have loſt one *juncture* already at the return of King CHARLES the *Second:* And the *Popiſh party* who help'd us forward in our Heats, as well as held back the *Diſſenter*, have ſince that time ſufficiently ſhewn why they did it, by making their *Advantages* all along by our *Diſcords.* None but the *Papiſts* who have hitherto *prevented* our *Union*, ought to be diſpleaſed at our preſent endeavour after it.

We have now *another favourable Seaſon*; and that ſuch as was never yet offer'd to us, by reaſon of the League at this time between the *Proteſtant Princes* and *States.* In this *Bill* we ſhall go as far as they deſire us to go. So that there can be no need of any conſiderable *alteration* to be made for the future.

Let

AY26
13

Let us not a *second Time* ſuffer our ſelves to be ſo far miſtaken in our own *Intereſt*, as to neglect that which will ſo much make for our Peace: Which is what all true friends to the *Reform'd Religion* muſt needs deſire; and I know none but the *Common Enemy*, that can reaſonably be diſpleaſed at our Endeavours for the promoting of it. I am

SIR,

*Your very humble Servant*

N. N.

38462